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ABSTRACT

The Colorado State University's program for master teachers stressed the "collaboration for growth" concept throughout the program's conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation. The program began in Fall 1979, with an emphasis on analysis of instruction. The program's second year focused on the application of educational theories in teaching. During the third year, expansion of teaching and educational models was the major emphasis. The program's implementation involved the designing of its courses and activities, including individual growth plans, class activities, a video course, summer workshops, change projects, and a culminating paper. The program's evaluation found both strengths and weaknesses in three categories: instructional growth, personal growth, and redefinition of roles. These strengths and weaknesses are listed, along with several conclusions that have emerged from the Master Teacher Program. (CJ)

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THE MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLABORATION FOR GROWTH

Paper presented at the Association of Teacher Education Conference
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An appropriate title for this presentation is "collaboration for growth," the growth of public school and university professionals committed to instructional excellence and the best education for kids. The secret of the "success" we have experienced was perhaps 1) this common goal and 2) the acknowledgement that we needed each other to accomplish this goal.

Our hopes are to be able to communicate to you the various elements of this staff development program which may be applicable in whole or in part to the growth of practicing teachers at other institutions and to share with you the excitement, stimulation and positive impact this collaborative interaction has had on us as individuals and professionals. We will share with you our perspectives on 1) the conceptualization of the program, 2) the implementation of the program and 3) the evaluation of the program.

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THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM

It doesn't often happen in teacher education that one can sit down and design a program that is just the way you want it. Usually we're revising, adapting, and rewriting what is already in existence, having to live with compromise. In the spring of 1979, Bill Timpson and I (Barbara Nelson) had the rare opportunity to do so.

In a meeting of the Department of Education Advisory Council, there was some informal discussion about the future of the degree program in Instruction. The focal question was: "Is there an existing clientele to want to focus in a graduate program on the teaching process or do teachers want to diversify, branching off into fields such as administration, counseling, reading, etc." Obviously the hierarchical nature of schools rewards teachers for developing new areas of expertise rather than developing depth in their understanding of and skills in the teaching process.

We are convinced that there were people who wanted to remain in the classroom and who would be excited about growing as teachers. As a result we sat down and designed an instruction program that we felt would meet the needs of those teachers.

We asked ourselves, "What seems to work well in other education graduate programs?" First, most programs have a core of courses specifically in the discipline and focused on the development of new skills and understandings. Therefore, we specified three "core" courses, two focusing on the instructional process and one focusing on the change process. Second, a field experience was associated with each program and it seemed to be a helpful vehicle for applying new skills. While part of our intent was to assist teachers to expand their instructional repertoires for the classroom, an underlying goal was to enable good teachers to provide instructional leadership by sharing their expertise with their colleagues. Since Bill and I had just developed a summer program for practicing teachers, Instituting Improvement in Teaching (IIT); which offered individuals one-week, half-day one-credit workshops oriented around topics of interest and need (e.g., Stress Management, Teaching as Performing, Assertive Discipline, Teacher Effectiveness Training, Parent and Community Involvement), we had a natural vehicle for getting "teachers teaching other teachers." Finally, in the "old" instruction program, students had flexibility in selecting courses to meet their individual instructional needs. They could select courses in subject matter content (e.g., science, English) or educational content (e.g., reading). We determined that this flexibility could be expanded to meet the needs particularly of elementary teachers who could focus more broadly on the instructional process and/or content.

Next, Bill and I had some of our own biases about working with practicing teachers. First, we saw teachers as relatively isolated and felt that it was important to provide a support group which would enable the risk-taking needed for growth. So we decided to keep each group together through the

three core courses. Second, in education we talk a lot about individualization and yet at the graduate level we tend to have everyone do the same thing no matter what their needs (e.g., write a paper, make a presentation). Hence, we determined that our students would develop and implement individual growth plans (contracts). Third, we felt that Master Teachers had a significant role to play in instructional leadership, both within and outside of their schools and that they were uniquely qualified to play that role most effectively. Thus in the Change Agent course students would work for an understanding of educational change, develop, implement and evaluate a change project based on the understandings of the change process and their own schools. For this project, we asked them to develop change projects that expanded beyond their individual classrooms. We encouraged "practical research" and required evaluation both of the process and the product. In this same vein, we hoped that our students could impact not only the educational processes in their schools but also in a larger arena. Therefore, their culminating "position paper" was to be "disseminatable," written so that it could be shared with colleagues in journal articles, curriculum packages, etc. Finally, we felt it was important for us as university professors (often accused of being in our ivory towers) to get out in the classrooms to see teachers in action, to team teach with them and to work with their students. Since our own teaching experiences were at the secondary level, this was particularly important as we worked with elementary teachers.

Once we had planned our program, we were anxious to get it into the system, and our department head somehow "cleared the way" for us and we began the program in the fall of 1979. While I sometimes wonder whether we should have been more patient and waited a year until we had more fully conceptualized the program, our students have been integral and highly important to the development of this program and I'm not sure that the "university professors product" would have been as good as the "collaborative product." Perhaps the biggest change from our original conceptualization has been in the two Advances in Instruction courses. The first year, we had a heavy focus on analysis--getting our students to critically examine themselves as teachers and their schools as places for learning. We also wanted them to be conversant in the educational theories and research which have impacted and are impacting education. We felt that application of these theories into practical classroom strategies would happen on an individual basis. In retrospect, sometimes it did and sometimes it didn't. And while the individual growth plans worked well, we had students going in a multitude of directions.

In the second year of the program, we adopted a text, Models of Teaching (Joyce and Weil). Instead of having students read from a variety of sources and apply their knowledges in a variety of ways, all would share common readings and execute common applications. The focus this year was more an application, including selection of the models to accomplish specific goals, adaptation of the models to different clientele and age groups and evaluation of the models. While students still implemented their own individual growth plans, the common focus on the models provided a cohesiveness in the experience. Students still examined the theories, but had a better handle on the application of those theories.

In this the third year of the program, we have expanded the models approach, consolidating those models which overlap in Joyce and Weil (e.g., the inquiry models), eliminating some models we felt were inappropriate to classrooms (e.g., T-Group) adding models not covered in Joyce and Weil (e.g., cooperative learning, peer tutoring), developing some new models (e.g., teaching as performing) and looking at discipline strategies from a "models perspective" using Wolfgang and Glickman's Solving Discipline Problems.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM

To provide an overview of the program, we have outlined the key components of the program--the courses and the experiences.

- A. Description of Courses (see attached brochure)
- B. Description of Experiences
 - 1. Individual Growth Plans
 - a. Curriculum development (e.g., math instruction in 2nd grade, writing curriculum for remedial students, developing gifted and talented resources)
 - b. Organization (e.g., time management, delegating responsibilities, gathering and organizing materials)
 - c. Instruction (e.g., applying models in different contexts over time, making new models, matching instruction to students)
 - 2. Class Activities
 - a. Peer teaching
 - b. Sharing of experiences
 - c. Speakers from inside and outside of education
 - d. Sharing of outside research
 - 3. Video Course
 - a. Preparation for filming in schools (students, administration)
 - b. Actual filming
 - c. Editing
 - d. Evaluation
 - e. Public relations with district/community
 - 4. Summer Workshops
 - a. Joint planning and research
 - b. Preparation for dealing with the clientele
 - c. Defining responsibilities
 - d. Execution
 - e. Evaluation

5. Change Projects

- a. Awareness of process
- b. Analysis of climate
- c. Planning strategies
- d. Communicating with constituents
- e. Analyzing results

6. Culminating paper

- a. Differentiating problem for study
- b. Library research on topic
- c. Practical Application
 1. In-school research
 2. Curriculum development
 3. Program development

THE EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

In analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of this program, we grouped responses into three categories: 1) Instructional Growth 2) Personal Growth and 3) Redefinition of Roles.

Instructional Growth

The program strengths in this category are as follows:

1. Teachers develop a schema or framework for understanding all methods of teaching and learning. Because of the focus on a systematic approach to instruction, individuals are able to talk about the instructional process using a common language. As a result, they are better able to determine why they do what they do.
2. Teachers develop a better understanding of the thinking processes of their students.
3. Teachers develop a more sophisticated teaching repertoire. They are able to select from various models in light of their goals for learning, their students' needs, and their own individual perspectives.
4. No teaching strategy is effective when it is used as a "cook-book" solution. Depending on the particular subject matter content, the age and characteristics of students, and the philosophies of teachers, individuals learn how to adapt and modify the models.

5. Teachers are sometimes bombarded with new ideas in district-sponsored in-service, in professional reading, and in university courses. It is critical that they develop the skills to evaluate various teaching approaches, to see the overlap, interplay, and underlying philosophies of seemingly conflicting ideas.
6. It is important that theory be translated into practice. Teachers want to be able to apply their skills and knowledges and they have a high level of enthusiasm for "relevant theory."
7. Having three instructors working with the program (Sharon Johnson, Teacher Corps Community Coordinator, Ft. Lupton, Colorado shared in the teaching with Bill Timpson and Barbara Nelson) gave individuals a unique opportunity to interact with instructors with different backgrounds, skills and areas of expertise.

In exploring with individuals the weaknesses of the program in the category of Instructional Growth, the following comments were noted.

1. Participants in the program felt that the amount of material presented in the three core courses might have been more valuable if it had been presented in four courses. It would have given more time for demonstration and assimilation into the classroom.
2. Participants in the program felt that it was hard to formulate individual growth plans and/or change projects at the beginning of a program before some of the critical material had been presented.
3. The instructors in the program found it difficult to objectively evaluate individual growth plans and change projects because of the diversity of activities and the context in which people were working.
4. Students had to struggle to some extent A) to determine their own needs, B) to design activities to meet those needs and C) to adapt the content and assignments to their own unique circumstances.

Personal Growth

While the participants in the program experienced significant growth in their instructional capabilities, their personal growth was perhaps the most dramatic.

1. Many individuals developed confidence in themselves and their expertise. Often this happened because they recognized what they already knew. When they started, all of them felt good about their teaching abilities; however, they felt perhaps more unique and competent to share their expertise at the end of the program.

Also, because of their activities in their own schools, they got some nice reinforcement from: 1) school boards, 2) parents, 3) superintendents and principals, and 4) colleagues, and 5) the community. Some outside recognition does a lot for growth!

2. Commitment to growth requires a willingness to participate in a process that is not always easy. The participants and instructors developed a willingness to take risks and to use the results, good or bad, to continue the growth process.
3. There are many personal rewards from a shared goal. The interaction, communication, feedback and camaraderie which developed among all participants provided a needed support group and a positive sounding board. Additionally, interaction with a group of committed teachers helped people develop more pride in their profession.
4. Participants in the program played a significant role in developing the program. To make sure that the content and activities were meeting their needs, they soon learned to be assertive, defining and "demanding" what they needed to know. These assertiveness skills had a very positive impact on their work with principals, parents, and colleagues.
5. Participants further developed their communication skills as they assumed leadership roles. Skill development in speaking, writing, organizing, negotiating and facilitating were evident.
6. The participants included kindergarten teachers, university professors and most grade levels in between. Many disciplines were represented (art, music, English, physical education, business, science, history, mathematics, etc.). This diversity helped develop greater articulation, empathy, respect and support for other teachers. They weren't competing with one another but rather working collaboratively to improve instruction wherever it may occur.
7. The concept of "teachers as learners" had some nice impact back in classrooms. Students became interested in what their teachers were learning and wanted to help them implement and evaluate new strategies.

Some weaknesses in the Personal Growth category are as follows:

1. Intense loyalty to one's own "group" may create cliques which can inhibit communication with other teachers in other groups. The support group concept needs to be expanded to include other teachers as well.
2. Many participants had not been on campus for several years. There was anxiety involved in working within the structure of the unfamiliar university community. The pressure of being tested rather than giving tests also created frustrations.

3. If you are already a full time teacher, the added responsibility of digesting new material, writing papers and preparing for class takes almost more effort and hours than exist. Because these were dedicated teachers, there was sometimes resentment when "class work" interfered with their teaching.
4. A strong, sharing and support group developed in all classes. Sometimes it was hard to stay "on task" and on schedule when all members are so uninhibited. Adjustments were continually being made so that all material could be covered.

Redefinition of Roles

The program was developed around the concept of a Master Teacher, and some redefinition of traditional teacher roles consequently emerged. The strengths of the program in this category are as follows:

1. Teachers began to define themselves as instructional leaders and change agents. This role was not competitive with that of the principal but rather became a supportive peer relationship. Individuals recognized themselves as responsible for and able to contribute to the growth of their colleagues, the development of curriculum, and the positive presentation of new instructional ideas.
2. The participants in the program became collaborators--with each other, their colleagues, the administration, the university--instead of being consumers, doing what someone else has determined as right.
3. These individuals moved into a significant public relations role as their activities became known to the superintendent, the school board and the community.
4. In their new roles, these teachers facilitated: A) dialogue about instruction in many contexts, B) examination of current educational practices, and C) the exploration of alternatives. Additionally, they recognized and enacted a very positive political role.
5. The university professors have developed credibility with both undergraduate students on campus and with practicing teachers by getting back into classrooms.

The weaknesses identified in this category were as follows:

1. The program has not been an overwhelming success in terms of numbers. However, it has attracted a relatively small cadre of high-caliber, committed teachers who were both willing and able to take on new roles.

2. On-campus responsibilities don't always enable university professors to spend as much time in schools as they would like. Fortunately, one professor was able to spend extensive time in the schools filming for the video correspondence course.

CONCLUSION

In working with the Master Teacher Program, several conclusions emerge:

1. Good teachers want to grow and they are seeking programs that respect and build upon their skills.
2. Collaboration between the university and the public schools is integral to the growth of teachers at all levels.
3. A person's "success" in the growth process requires commitment, openness to new ideas and the capacity to take risks.
4. The "success" of a graduate program for teachers depends upon flexibility and individualization.
5. Given the input, opportunity and support, good teachers will go far beyond a professor's expectations of their growth potential.